

U.S. Patent Appln. No. 10/038,719
Amendment Dated Dec. 7, 2005
Reply to Office Action of Oct. 7, 2005
Docket No. BOC9-2001-0025 (271)

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

These remarks are submitted in response to the Final Office Action dated October 7, 2005 (Office Action). As this response is timely filed, no fee is believed due.

Claims 1-29 were rejected in the Office Action. Each of the claims was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) were rejected in the Office Action as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,470,338 to Rizzo, *et al.* (Rizzo).

In response, Applicants have amended independent Claims 1, 7, 15, 16, and 22 to emphasize certain aspects of Applicants' invention. Applicants also have amended Claims 4 and 19 to maintain consistency among the claims. Applicants have added Claims 30-33 to emphasize certain additional features of Applicants' invention. As discussed herein, the amendments and newly-presented claims are fully supported throughout the Specification. (See, e.g., Specification, p. 6, line 1 - p. 7, line 12; p. 8, lines 8-17; and p. 10, lines 1-13.) No new matter has been introduced by virtue of the amendments or newly-presented claims.

Claims 1-6 and 16-21

With respect to independent Claims 1 and 16, Applicants respectfully assert that Rizzo fails to expressly or inherently teach every feature recited in the claims, as amended. For example, Rizzo does not expressly or inherently teach storing business profiles comprising business attributes in an online business registry, wherein each business profile includes a customer list for a corresponding business, as recited in amended Claims 1 and 16. Nor does Rizzo expressly or inherently teach that the stored business attributes of a profiled business are classified into one of a plurality of access levels, as also recited in independent Claims 1 and 16, as amended.

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At pages 3 and 4 of the Office Action it is stated that Rizzo restricts access to business profile information based upon established categories. The statement is solely based on reference to element 360 of FIG. 1C of Rizzo. Element 360 of FIG. 1C corresponds to a step in a process of matching potential clients with attorneys. The step of element 360 merely recites that, according to the Rizzo procedure, "an attorney can download information [from a prospective client] and email information to a colleague, or reply to the [client]." An attorney's downloading information supplied by a potential client and then deciding whether to forward the information to a colleague or e-mail a reply to the prospective client, however, teaches nothing, either expressly or inherently, about categorizing business attributes of the attorney according to access levels. Nowhere does Rizzo describe storing business profiles that comprises attributes categorized by access levels or business profiles that contain customer lists of the attorneys profiled, as recited in amended independent Claims 1 and 16.

Moreover, the lack of these features in Rizzo precludes Rizzo's providing two additional features recited in each of independent Claims 1 and 16, as amended. First, without the storing of business profiles that include corresponding customer lists, Rizzo is incapable of determining, based on a comparison of respective customer lists, whether a business that makes on online inquiry is a competitor of a business located in the registry, as recited in amended independent Claims 1 and 16. (See Specification, p. 6, line 24 p. 7, line 4.) Second, without the categorization of business attributes according to access levels, Rizzo is incapable of restricting access of the inquiring business to less than all of the access levels of business attributes if the inquiring business is determined to be a competitor, as also recited in amended independent Claims 1 and 16. (See, e.g., Specification, p. 6, lines 21-23.)

Nowhere does Rizzo suggest that a database of information about an attorney or other professional includes customer lists of the professional. Nor does Rizzo suggest

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that, when an online inquiry is submitted to such a database, a determination is made as to whether the inquirer (e.g., a prospective client) is a competitor of the professional (e.g., an attorney) about whom the online inquiry is made. It follows, therefore, that Rizzo fails to expressly or inherently teach at least these features recited in independent Claims 1 and 16, as amended.

Applicants thus respectfully submit that independent Claims 1 and 16, as amended, define over the prior art. Applicants further respectfully submit that whereas dependent Claims 2-6 and 17-21 each depend from one of the amended claims while reciting additional features, these dependent claims likewise define over the prior art.

Claims 7-14 and 22-29

Applicants respectfully assert with respect to Claims 7 and 22 that Rizzo similarly fails to expressly or inherently teach every features of these claims, as amended. For example, as already noted, Rizzo does not expressly or inherently teach storing business profiles comprising business attributes in an online business registry, wherein the business attributes corresponding to each stored business profile are classified into one of a plurality of access levels, as recited in amended independent Claims 7 and 22. Rizzo further fails to teach, expressly or inherently, that each business profile identifies a profiled business by market segment occupied and business function performed by the corresponding business, as also recited in amended independent Claims 7 and 22.

The portion of Rizzo cited at pages 8-9 of the Office Action only states that "when law firms and attorneys are signed members they preferably provide similar information about themselves as was entered by the potential clients, e.g., jurisdictions in which they practice, areas of expertise, size of law firm, and e-mail address." However, even if this is equated with identifying a market segment and business function of a business, it remains that Rizzo fails to expressly or inherently teach the categorizing of information

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for each firm into a plurality of access levels, as recited in amended independent Claims 7 and 22.

Rizzo, moreover, nowhere discloses that information regarding the market segments and business functions of respective businesses are compared in order to determine whether an inquiring business is a competitor of a business whose information is stored in a registry, as recited in amended independent Claims 7 and 22. Accordingly, without either the categorization of information into access levels or any information comparison to determine whether two businesses are competitors, Rizzo is precluded from restricting access of an inquiring business to less than all of a plurality of access levels of business attributes, as further recited in amended independent Claims 7 and 22.

It thus follows that Rizzo fails to expressly or inherently teach every feature of independent Claims 7 and 22, as amended. Applicants, therefore, respectfully submit that amended independent Claims 7 and 22 define over the prior art. Applicants also respectfully submit that whereas dependent Claims 8-14 and 22-29 depend from one of the amended claims while reciting additional features, these dependent claims likewise define over the prior art.

Claim 15

Applicants also respectfully submit that Rizzo fails to expressly or inherently teach every feature recited in Claim 15, as amended. Claim 15 is directed to a system for connecting businesses through business profiles of a plurality of participating businesses. As recited in the claim, each business profile comprises business attributes that include communications information for establishing a communications link with each of the participating businesses. The communications links established by the system, more particularly, can be a telephone call, a conference call, or a video conference. The

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communications link is established based on the communications information included in the business attributes of the business with whom the link is established.

Element 360 of FIG. 1C in Rizzo is cited at page 5 of the Office Action as disclosing the establishment of a communication link according to a business attribute. As noted above, element 360 of the figure is a step in a process of matching potential clients with attorneys according to Rizzo. As also noted, element 360 merely recites that upon receiving information from a potential client, "an attorney can download information [from a prospective client] and email information to a colleague, or replay to the [client]."

The forwarding and responding via e-mail described in Rizzo is entirely distinct from establishing a communications link by telephone or video, as recited in amended Claim 15. Rizzo's focus is exclusively data network-based communications, and Rizzo fails to teach, expressly or inherently, the establishment of alternative communications links such as a telephone call, conference call, or video conference. Applicants respectfully maintain, therefore, that Claim 15, as amended, defines over the prior art.

Newly-presented Claims 30-33

Newly-presented Claim 30 is directed to a method of connecting businesses, the method including establishment of a communications link comprising a telephone call, conference call, or video conference. As already noted, this feature is not taught, either expressly or inherently, by Rizzo. Moreover, Rizzo fails to teach or suggest that the communications link can be established based upon communications information contained in the business attributes of a business profile stored on a registry, as recited in newly-presented Claim 31.

Rizzo further fails to expressly or inherently teach that the communication information can comprise a preferred contact time and/or a pre-selected contact person,

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as recited in newly-presented Claim 32. Since Rizzo fails to expressly or inherently teach either the use of communication information comprising a preferred contact time and/or a pre-selected contact person or a plurality of communication modes, it further follows that Rizzo is precluded from selecting among alternative plurality of communications links based on a preferred contact time and/or pre-selected contact person, as recited in Claim 33. Applicants, therefore, respectfully maintain that newly-presented Claims 30-33 define over the prior art.

CONCLUSION

Applicants believe that this application is now in full condition for allowance, which action is respectfully requested. The Applicants request that the Examiner call the undersigned if clarification is needed on any matter within this Amendment, or if the Examiner believes a telephone interview would expedite the prosecution of the subject application to completion.

Respectfully submitted,

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